



*ASSOCIATION OF REGISTRARS
OF THE UNIVERSITIES AND
COLLEGES OF CANADA*

***NATIONAL TRANSCRIPT GUIDE
FOR USE IN CANADIAN
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS***

March 2003

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ARUCC

ASSOCIATION OF REGISTRARS OF THE UNIVERSITIES AND
COLLEGES OF CANADA

***NATIONAL TRANSCRIPT GUIDE FOR USE IN CANADIAN
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS***

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With the Assistance of

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**NATIONAL TRANSCRIPT GUIDE FOR USE IN CANADIAN
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Executive Summary**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2001, the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada's (ARUCC) Executive Committee launched an initiative to develop a national academic record and transcript guide for use in Canadian postsecondary institutions. This *Report* is the result of that initiative.

Funded in part through the Learning Initiatives Program by the Learning and Literacy Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada, the work began at the end of August 2002 and was finished seven months later. A National Committee representative of all types of postsecondary institutions, in all parts of the country, was formed. Its investigations were supported by four representative Regional Committees from the Atlantic, from Québec, from Ontario and from the West.

A thorough literature search and analysis preceded four regional workshops which were held to gain perspective on current practices regarding the transcript and gather draft recommendations on the content and on the form of the transcript in the Canadian postsecondary context. The National Committee analyzed the draft recommendations and issued the final guidelines included in this *Report*.

The last chapter of the *Report* discusses current transcript issues from a Canadian postsecondary perspective and outlines themes for further study in the larger context of student record management issues.

**NATIONAL TRANSCRIPT GUIDE FOR USE IN CANADIAN
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Forward**

FORWARD

The 2003 edition of ARUCC's ~~National Transcript Guide~~ would not have been possible but for the dedication and the hard work of ARUCC members who volunteered their time and expertise for this project. My thanks go to all those who, in Regional Committees, in the National Committee, in their institutions, have spent time and effort analyzing and debating the issues and whose contributions have helped make this project a reality.

I wish to thank Ygal Leibu, consultant for this project, who provided the guidance, organization, humor and insight to keep the committees and the work of the project on track and on time.

I also wish to thank the members of ARUCC's Executive Committee who, since the summer of 2000 when the plan emerged to update the 1986 ARUCC's report on student records, have unfailingly supported this project.

ARUCC is grateful to the Learning and Literacy Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada, which, through its Learning Initiatives Program, contributed financially to the project. We thank AACRAO's Executive Director, Jerry Sullivan, for authorizing the publication, for a limited period of time, of AACRAO's material on ARUCC's National Transcript Guide Project web site.

Because they reflect the path of learning and because in the contemporary world learning has become both more diverse and more complex, transcripts of student

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Forward**

It is our wish and hope that the ARUCC 2003 *National Transcript Guide* will serve well the postsecondary education community in Canada and that when warranted by new educational trends and changing circumstances, ARUCC will update it regularly.

J. Lynne Theriault
Registrar
Mount Saint Vincent University
Chair
ARUCC's National Committee on the National Transcript Guide

**NATIONAL TRANSCRIPT GUIDE FOR USE IN CANADIAN
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Chapter I - Introduction**

**CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION**

In 1986, ARUCC sponsored and published the *Report of the Task Force on Student Records*. The *Report* focused mainly on the “issues that affect the creation, maintenance, security and control of the student record”¹, but it also dealt with transcript related issues, particularly with the transcript data elements².

While the ARUCC sponsored 1986 *Report on Student Records* continues to express the basic principles of academic record integrity, it no longer reflects current thinking, practices and concerns regarding the academic transcript. During the past decade and a half, postsecondary education in Canada has undergone significant change in every respect: the Canadian population’s participation rates have increased, the absolute number of students has increased dramatically, the educational background of the participants is more diverse than ever, methods of delivery have multiplied. While traditional learners continue to move from high school to postsecondary institutions, increasing numbers of adult learners are entering or reentering colleges and universities. As a result, the academic transcript, which in previous decades had an active life of approximately four to ten years and a long inactive life, now has an active life of four to twenty-five years and a shorter inactive life span.

New patterns of study, new delivery methods and the increased active life of the transcript are new realities which have added new concepts and new vocabulary to the academic record. As the new reality is still somewhat fluid in many respects, the concepts are not always clear and the vocabulary is sometimes confusing. Discussions among ARUCC members and among members of the regional associations of the registrars in all parts of the country indicate that many questions abound regarding the information deemed appropriate to the transcript, as opposed to the student record as a whole. The nomenclature needed to accurately describe and record the outcomes of diverse learning environments and delivery methods is under intense debate as inconsistencies risk affecting negatively the current and future interpretation of the student record.

¹ *Report of the Task Force on Student Records, A Publication Sponsored by the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada*, April 1986, p. 3

² *Id.* pp. 10-17

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Chapter I - Introduction

The main issues then are “what information to record” on the transcript and “how to record” the needed information, so that the transcript accurately and equitably reflects educational achievements, and the information it conveys is clear and unambiguous for present and future users. The 2003 ARUCC *National Transcript Guide* seeks to answer these questions.

This *Guide* is neither a normative nor a prescriptive document. Its purpose is not to set policies in this regard -- only postsecondary institutions may do that -- but rather to point to good practices, even best practices, in this area and by thus doing, to help establish standards for the postsecondary transcript. Its main goals are to clarify the issues involved, to define transcript related concepts and data elements, and to recommend appropriate content and format for the postsecondary transcript, for use in the Canadian, North-American and international contexts. It should be noted that this *Guide*'s recommendations are for postsecondary institutions to consider and to weigh in the light of their traditions, their policies and their constraints, legal or otherwise.

Chapter II, *Background, Process and Methodology*, presents the project's background, describes its organization and the process by which the recommendations were achieved. In addition, it defines the object of the *National Transcript Guide*, establishes its limits, outlines clearly the definition of the postsecondary transcript and the basic principles which govern the guidelines, lists the transcript's components in the Canadian context, presents the classification of the recommendations, as well as the methodological choices made in this report.

Chapter III, *Transcript Data Elements*, is an effort to list, to classify and, where warranted, to define in an as exhaustive and as unambiguous a manner as possible, all data elements discussed in relation to the postsecondary transcript in Canada, whether they are recommended for inclusion or not.

Chapter IV discusses some of the current issues in the postsecondary transcript in Canada and lists issues for further analysis and debate.

Three *Appendices* complete the *National Transcript Guide*.

***CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND, PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY***

II.1 Project Background and Organization

ARUCC's 2003 edition of the *National Transcript Guide* was proposed, designed and developed, with the assistance of a project consultant, by ARUCC members who volunteered their time and expertise.

At the ARUCC 2000 conference in Saint Andrews, NB, Frank Gelin, Executive Director and Co-Chair, BC Council on Admissions and Transfer, presented the British Columbia Registrars' Association work on the *British Columbia Record and Transcript Guide for Use in Postsecondary Institutions in BC* (last revised March 25, 1998).

Following the presentation, and given the intense interest raised by the issues involved, the ARUCC Executive undertook an initiative to develop a national academic record and transcript guide for use in Canadian postsecondary institutions. Then, as today, the initiative seemed both timely and opportune:

- It has been more than 15 years since ARUCC sponsored its first report on student records.
- The 2000 and 2002 ARUCC conferences, as well as periodic inquiries and discussions on the ARUCC Listserv, indicate that there is a clear need for standards in the content and in the presentation of the official transcript in Canadian postsecondary institutions, whether they are affiliated or not with ARUCC. The development of national reasoned guidelines for the transcript, intended to become a live document which is updated as frequently as required by the evolution of the Canadian postsecondary community will help institutions facilitate student mobility and increase the portability of postsecondary learning in Canada.
- The great contemporary diversity in learning modes creates significant challenges for revising the 1986 Task Force's work on student records. In a global environment dominated by instant communications, by technology and by the Internet, by the emergence of the virtual classroom, the internationalization of postsecondary education, new trends in transferring credits and in the assessment and recognition of prior learning,

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Chapter II – Background, Process and Methodology

create a new environment in which administrative practices must be revised, adapted or changed. It is in this new environment that ARUCC members must continuously ask themselves, with respect to the official transcript: what needs to be recorded and how should it be recorded?

- Achieving administrative standards, which are a reflection of academic quality in the content and presentation of the official transcript, will insure that learning will be recognized regardless of the circumstances in which it occurred. This in turn will favor and encourage a diversity of learning modes.

It is in this context that in September 2001, the ARUCC Executive Committee submitted to the Learning and Literacy Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) a proposal to fund the development of a national academic and transcript guide for use in Canadian postsecondary institutions. The proposal was selected on a competitive basis from among sixty-eight proposals. Funding through a Learning Initiatives Program contribution agreement was announced in June 2002 and the first meeting of the National Committee took place at the end of August 2002. The final report was published by the end of March 2003, in accordance with the commitments made by the ARUCC's Executive Committee.

A National Committee, with the help of four Regional Committees, prepared the recommendations on transcript data elements. The Regional Committees provided input on issues and made recommendations to the National Committee. The National Committee was ultimately responsible for establishing the transcript guidelines. The National Committee consisted of a chair and eight members:

Louis R. Ariano, University Registrar, York University, ON
Glenn W. Collins, University Registrar, Memorial University of Newfoundland, NL
Maggie Hartley, Assistant Registrar, University of British Columbia, BC
David J. Hinton, Registrar, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB
Yves Jodoin, Directeur, Service de l'admission, Université du Québec à Montréal, QC³
Clay MacDougall, Deputy Registrar, Humber College, Toronto, ON⁴
Bruce MacKenzie, Assistant Registrar, Concordia University, QC
Debi Sandul, Associate Registrar, Records and Registration, The University of Lethbridge, AB
J. Lynne Theriault, Registrar, Mount Saint Vincent University, NS, Chair.

³ Since mid-February 2003

⁴ As of the end of January 2003

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Each Regional Committees consisted of a chair and five members (six in the Atlantic, four in Québec). Lack of institutional membership in ARUCC did not prevent a person from sitting on a regional committee for the purposes of this project.

The Atlantic Regional Committee was composed of:

Donna Ball, Assistant Registrar, Records & Registration Manager, Memorial University of Newfoundland, NL

Patrick J. Donahue, College Registrar, Nova Scotia Community College, NS

Marion Hannaford, Associate Registrar (Admissions), University of Prince Edward Island, PEI

David Hinton, Registrar, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB, Chair

Susan Leblanc, Registraire, Université de Moncton, NB

Mary MacGillivray, Deputy Registrar, Dalhousie University, NS

J. Lynne Theriault, Registrar, Mount Saint Vincent University, NS

The Quebec Regional Committee was composed of:

Pierre Bergeron, Adjoint au Registraire, Université de Montréal, QC

Sylvia Franke, Acting Registrar and Director of Admissions, McGill University, QC

Yves Jodoin, Directeur, Service de l'admission, Université du Québec à Montréal, QC

Bruce MacKenzie, Assistant Registrar, Concordia University, QC, Chair

Louise Richard, Directrice du Service des dossiers universitaires, Université du Québec à Montréal, QC.

The Ontario Regional Committee was composed of:

Louis R. Ariano, University Registrar, York University, ON, Chair

Alex Goody, Associate Registrar, University of Guelph, ON

Kathleen Massey, Registrar, Centennial College, ON

Clay MacDougall, Deputy Registrar, Humber College, ON

Al Vaughan, Registrar, Niagara College, ON

Henry Wong, Registraire, Université d'Ottawa, ON

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The Western Regional Committee was composed of:

Maggie Hartley, Assistant Registrar, University of British Columbia, BC, Chair

Joan Langevin, Registrar, Aurora College, NWT

Greg Link, Registrar, Malaspina College, BC

Gilbert Perras, Registrar, Athabasca University, AB

Debi Sandul, Associate Registrar, Records and Registration, The University of Lethbridge, AB

Richard Schick, Acting Registrar and Director of Student Records, University of Saskatchewan, SK

Ygal Leibu, past Registraire at Université du Québec à Montréal (1978-1998) and past University Registrar at York University (1998-2000) was selected to serve as project consultant. The project consultant was responsible for research, for drafting working papers, for supporting the organization of the National Committee's meetings and for following up on decisions made at its meetings, for supporting the regional workshops, for developing and maintaining the project's web site, and for drafting and revising the National Committee's report, in English and in French.

II.2 The Process for Issuing Recommendations

The project was structured to insure that a wide representation of postsecondary institutions from all regions and provinces, both universities and colleges, with diverse characteristics, histories and missions, contributed to drafting the guidelines.

In addition, in order to involve as many professionals as possible in the project and in order to take advantage of their expertise, a series of project web sites were created and published in early January 2003, in English⁵, in French⁶ as well as a private web site for the use of the National Committee. The project web sites allowed interested persons to follow the evolution of ARUCC's National Transcript Guide project in all its stages, from the Executive Committee's proposal to the completion of the report. The project web site housed all reference documents, all projects documents, notes of all meetings, working papers such as recommendations issued in the regional workshops and draft recommendations of the National Committee.

⁵ <http://arucctranscriptguide.homeunix.org:8080/>

⁶ <http://arucctranscriptguide.homeunix.org:8080/ARUCCfr/>

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A discussion forum on the project web site was designed to allow participants to comment quickly and easily, to express opinions and to take positions on the issues involved and on the draft recommendations. This communication infrastructure insured that ARUCC members were adequately informed about the progress of the project and were given timely opportunities to voice their comments, observations, and concerns. The project web site will be archived after the completion of the project.

The National Committee met to discuss issues, set directions and determine tasks to be accomplished. The first meeting was held on August 24 - 25, 2002 at Centennial College, in Toronto. The second meeting was held on November 22 - 23, 2002 at the Institut de Tourisme et d'Hôtellerie du Québec, in Montreal. The third meeting was held on January 31 and February 1, 2003 at York University, in Toronto. The fourth meeting was held by conference call on March 13, 2003.

Four Regional Committees were struck, ensuring wide representation and consultation of the ARUCC member institutions and non-member organizations. Members of the National Committee chaired the Regional Committees. Four regional workshops were held with representatives from constituent sectors in each region. Regional recommendations for the transcript guidelines were consolidated and debated by the National Committee.

ATLANTIC: Halifax, NS, October 21 and 22, 2002

The meeting was hosted by Mary MacGillivray, Deputy Registrar, Dalhousie University.

Participants:

Donna Ball, Assistant Registrar, Records and Registration Manager, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Patrick J. Donahue, College Registrar, Nova Scotia Community College

Marion Hannaford, Associate Registrar (Admissions), University of Prince Edward Island

David Hinton, Chair, Registrar, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton

Susan Leblanc, Registrare, Université de Moncton

Mary MacGillivray, Deputy Registrar, Dalhousie University

J. Lynne Theriault, Registrar, Mount Saint Vincent University

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QUEBEC: Montreal, QC, November 11, 2002

The meeting was hosted by Yves Jodoin, Directeur, Service de l'admission, Université du Québec à Montréal.

Participants:

Pierre Bergeron, Adjoint au Registraire, Université de Montréal
Sylvia Franke, Acting Registrar and Director of Admissions, McGill University
Yves Jodoin, Directeur, Service de l'admission, Université du Québec à Montréal
Bruce MacKenzie, Assistant Registrar, Concordia University
Louise Richard, Directrice du Service des dossiers universitaires, Université du Québec à Montréal

ONTARIO: Toronto, ON, October 24 and 25, 2002

The meeting was hosted by Louis R. Ariano, University Registrar, York University.

Participants:

Louis R. Ariano, University Registrar, York University
Alex Goody, Associate Registrar, University of Guelph
Kathleen Massey, Registrar, Centennial College
Clay MacDougall, Registrar, Humber College
Al Vaughan, Registrar, Niagara College
Henry Wong, Registraire, Université d'Ottawa

WEST: Victoria, BC, November 1 and 2, 2002

The meeting was hosted by Maggie Hartley, Assistant Registrar, University of British Columbia.

Participants:

Maggie Hartley, Assistant Registrar, University of British Columbia
Joan Langevin, Registrar, Aurora College
Greg Link, Registrar, Malaspina College
Gilbert Perras, Registrar, Athabasca University

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Richard Schick, Acting Registrar and Director of Student Records, University of Saskatchewan.

Following an information session held for ARUCC members at the biennial conference in June 2002 in Edmonton⁷, the National Committee first looked at the existing literature on transcript content and format. A complete reference list was drafted and the literature was collected and distributed among members. The National Committee relied heavily on the 1986 ARUCC *Report on Student Records*, quoted earlier as well as on the 1996 American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO)'s report.⁸

At its first meeting in August 2002 in Toronto, the National Committee formulated a working definition of the transcript, determined taxonomy for the recommendations, flagged the main issues and determined a methodology for formulating, discussing and validating recommendations for the guidelines. This was done in an iterative fashion, in several stages:

- A literature search and analysis put into historical perspective past positions regarding the transcript's data elements and issues. To this end, a matrix of historical guidelines was built and analyzed. It was very interesting to see how, in the course of time, positions of the same organization have evolved regarding any given data element;
- The National Committee and the Regional Committees discussed the findings;
- The Regional Committees discussed the historical guidelines and formulated their own recommendations, based on their current perspectives, institutional and provincial constraints, legal or otherwise;
- The project consultant consolidated the regional recommendations in a form that allowed comparison among themselves as well as with the historic guidelines of various organizations;
- The National Committee discussed the findings and formulated a first version of national recommendations;

⁷ *Toward a National Transcript Guide: Round Table Discussion on the Issues*, Session 6A, Moderator J. Lynne Theriault

⁸ *Academic Record and Transcript Guide*, AACRAO, 1996, 37 pp.

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- The project consultant consigned the recommendations in a readable form and circulated them among the National Committee members;
- The draft recommendations were finalized at subsequent meetings of the National Committee;
- The finalized draft recommendations and draft of the report's *Table of Contents*, were made available online, on the project web site, for the information of ARUCC members. Their feedback and comments were solicited. In addition to the material used by the National Committee in the course of its work, the project web site provided interactive tools for feedback, discussion and interaction among people who had an interest in the project. Posted messages were logged and archived for easy retrieval by date and by topic.

II.3 Scope and Methodology

The 2003 edition of ARUCC's *National Transcript Guide* is the result of a vast consultative process of ARUCC members as well as members of regional associations of university registrars and college registrars in all parts of the country. In response to the complexity of this process and the limits imposed by available time and resources, the National Committee determined from the onset of the project its boundaries and its deliverables.

Historically, publications of this nature have approached questions of content and format of the transcript in the larger context of the student record and of its database or of its underlying student information system. This was the case for the 1986 ARUCC *Report on Student Records* as well as of the 1996 AACRAO's *Academic and Transcript Guide* quoted earlier⁹. One notable exception is the 1998 *British Columbia Record and Transcript Guide for Use in Postsecondary Institutions in BC*, which limited itself to the schema of the transcript data elements, patterned after the 1996 AACRAO table of database and transcript components and adapted for the BC context. It should be noted that since the early 1980s, successive editions of AACRAO's *Academic Record and Transcript Guide* have constituted de facto models for the Canadian publications in this

⁹ It must be noted however that AACRAO also publishes periodically a separate document dealing specifically with questions related to the preservation of the student record (*Retention of Records. A Guide for Retention and Disposal of Student Records*, AACRAO, 2000, 50 pp.)

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area. This was the case with the ARUCC sponsored 1986 *Report of the Task Force on Student Records*, as well as with the 1998 BC document. The interest raised by the BC registrars' project among ARUCC professionals initiated the update of the 1986 ARUCC study.

The first questions, which the National Committee addressed, were the nature and the scope of the update to be undertaken. Was it going to be modeled on previous publications, or was it to break new ground by approaching the transcript issues from a different perspective? The 1996 AACRAO *Academic and Transcript Guide* was deemed to be a *modèle du genre* for its professionalism, and the National Committee undertook to reach the same standards of quality while taking a somewhat different approach.

At its first meeting, the National Committee decided to limit somewhat the scope of the 2003 guidelines to questions related to the postsecondary transcript and to leave for further study aspects related to the underlying information system (for example, are elements x, y, z recommended for the database?), or to the student record (what should the record contain, security of records, preservation and disposal policies and practices, etc.). At the same time, the National Committee decided that it would approach all transcript issues rigorously, that it would produce a clear and unambiguous commentary on all aspects of the transcript data elements, and that it would attempt to define or redefine the data elements in the light of the current context, trends of the Canadian postsecondary education and the challenges it faces.

As a result of this approach, all transcript data elements were classified in an appropriate category and none was determined to be "Miscellaneous". For example, data elements, which in the literature traditionally belonged to a category called "Supplemental Information for Graduate and Professional Students" were deemed to belong simply to the category "Records of Studies Pursued" and were classified therein. In the same vein, the National Committee created an entirely new category, appropriate for the current Canadian environment, called "External Learning Recognized by the Issuing Institution". This category stresses the importance of the portability of learning and the learners' mobility among institutions and among provinces. This category subsumes and groups logically a host of transcript data elements which in the past were scattered and not very well understood.

Finally, the National Committee made a conscious and sustained effort to clarify the concepts, to simplify the transcript's somewhat ambiguous terminology and generally to make more transparent, both for the professionals and the public, an important area of activity in registrars' offices.

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Consistent with its position that this project would limit itself strictly to transcript issues, the National Committee decided that systematic recommendations regarding the status of transcript data elements in the student database were not warranted. Specifically, any and all transcript data elements are derived from the student database. Therefore, if a given element is not contained in the student record database, regardless of the format of the database, it cannot be excerpted and transcribed. In this sense, recommendations on transcript data elements for the student database are redundant. On the other hand, this *Guide* is not an inventory of the student information system data elements. To recommend transcript data elements as data elements for the student database is either overkill or insufficient. In this *Guide*, a data element will be occasionally mentioned for the database in contexts where this helps clarify its recommended status for the transcript.

The National Committee's approach to postsecondary transcripts is based upon a clear definition and upon a few basic principles, which in turn govern its positions and recommendations.

Definition

The transcript is a subset of the student's academic record. The transcript should contain a complete and accurate history of the academic path of a given student in a particular postsecondary institution. Its content and format are determined by institutional history, evolution, policies and regulations and are subject to legal constraints.

Basic Guiding Principles

- The transcript is a trusted document and all efforts should be made to avoid undermining this trust.
- The official character of the transcript is determined by the criteria of both the sending and the receiving institution.
- The transcript is considered official when verified by the receiving institution.
- All credentials should be displayed on a single transcript which reflects the entire academic experience at the issuing institution.

Thus undergraduate and graduate studies should be displayed on the same transcript.

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- Expunging a student’s academic record contradicts the basic principle that the transcript should be a complete and historically accurate image of the academic record.

Thus, practices of academic forgiveness in the sense of expunging the record, that is rewriting history, are not recommended.

- Normally, policy changes affecting the transcript of the academic record should not be applied retroactively.

The following chapter details the transcript data elements, offers definitions and comments, sometimes redefinitions or entirely new definitions, as well as recommendations regarding the appropriateness, or lack thereof, of any and all data elements for the transcript. The transcript data elements are grouped in eight categories:

- Issuing Institution Identification
- Student Identification
- Admission
- Record of Studies Pursued
- Academic Status
- External Learning Recognized by the Issuing Institution
- Statement of Graduation
- Issuance Information

CHAPTER III
TRANSCRIPT DATA ELEMENTS

The recommendations used in this *Guide* are:

- **ESSENTIAL**
- **RECOMMENDED**
- **DISCRETIONARY**
- **NOT RECOMMENDED**

III.1 Identification of the Issuing Institution

1.1 Official Name of the Issuing Institution

ESSENTIAL

Full, legal name of the institution which issues the transcript. The official name should identify independent branches of multi-campus institutions. The existence of affiliated colleges with universities makes this imperative. The transcript key should include indefinitely previous names of the institution.

1.2 Location

Information that can be used to contact the issuing institution.

1.2.1 Location: City, Province, Postal Code

ESSENTIAL

1.2.2 Telephone Number, Fax Number, Web Site

RECOMMENDED

May be a part of the transcript key or on the face of the transcript.

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1.3 Institutional Identification Code
...for EDI

ESSENTIAL...

Institution identifier used in electronic transmissions, as per EDI standards.

III.2 Identification of the Student

2.1 Official name

ESSENTIAL

The student's official name of record, as per provincial legislation and institutional policies regarding names and change of names. Previous names known to the institution are essential for the database but are not recommended for the transcript.

2.2 Student Identification Codes

2.2.1 Student Institutional Identification Code

ESSENTIAL

A unique identifier assigned to the student by the issuing institution. This code is generated by the institution and is specific to the institution.

2.2.2 Student Provincial Identifiers Codes

Student identifiers mandated by and generated by the provincial education authorities, for example, Alberta's Student Identifier, British Columbia's Personal Education Number, the *Code permanente unique* in Québec, etc. These identifiers are used for reporting to the provincial authorities, for grant determination, and for statistical purposes. They have no bearing on the transcript.

2.2.3 ESIS National Student Number (ESIS-NSN) Code

Student identifier prescribed by Statistics Canada for statistical and analytical purposes. The ESIS-NSN is discussed in chapter IV.4.

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2.3 Address

DISCRETIONARY

In this context, the student's place of residence. The address serves no useful purpose on the transcript and may be considered a breach of the confidentiality of the student record.

2.4 Date of Birth

DISCRETIONARY

The date of birth is an essential item for the database, used for reports and research. Institutions should limit the notation on the transcript to the day and month of birth only. If used, the Canadian format (day, month) is recommended.

2.5 Place of Birth

NOT RECOMMENDED

2.6 Gender

NOT RECOMMENDED

2.7 Race, Ethnicity or First Nations Status

NOT RECOMMENDED

2.8 Marital Status

NOT RECOMMENDED

2.9 Religious Preference

NOT RECOMMENDED

2.10 Disability

NOT RECOMMENDED

2.11 Financial Sponsorship

NOT RECOMMENDED

2.12 Citizenship

NOT RECOMMENDED

Both elements concerning citizenship are essential for the database but are not recommended for the transcript.

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2.12.1 Country of citizenship NOT RECOMMENDED

2.12.2 Status with Citizenship and Immigration Canada NOT RECOMMENDED

The description that identifies the status of the student's citizenship or residency in Canada.

III.3 Basis of Admission NOT RECOMMENDED

Elements defining previous educational background, be it at the secondary school or equivalent level or at the postsecondary level (college or university studies), including standard test scores, are essential for the database, but are not recommended for the transcript.

See 6.1 Transfer Credits

III.4 Record of Studies Pursued

4.1 Program of Study Identification ESSENTIAL

This is the program of study pursued and for which normally a credential is sought. The institutionally approved curriculum defines the program of study. This data element's name (program, field of study, honours, major, minor, specialization, concentration, co-operative education, etc.) varies with institutional rules and practice.

In the case of joint or collaborative programs and degrees, whether the partnership is with either degree granting or with non-degree granting institutions, the names of all participating institutions are essential: each institution which takes part in a joint program, should be indicated on the transcript.

See 7.3 Program of Study at Graduation

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4.2 Course Identification Code

ESSENTIAL

The code that identifies the organization of subject matter and related learning experiences provided to students. This includes the department or the discipline identifier, the course number and the course title. Courses taught as special topics or as variable content courses should include the topic's title. Credits and grades should be noted on the transcript. While the methods of delivery are recommended for the database, they are not recommended for the transcript. This applies to Correspondence Courses, Distance Education or Distance Learning, Electronic Classroom Entries.

4.3 Period of Attendance

ESSENTIAL

Chronological notation showing the period of attendance of the student. The period of attendance is a prescribed span of time when instruction is provided. It may be interrupted by one or more holidays. The terminology and the definition of the period of attendance (term, session, trimester, etc.), vary on an institutional basis and are determined by internal rules and regulations.

4.4 Withdrawal from Period of Attendance Notation

Information concerning a student's exit or withdrawal from a course, from a program, or from the institution, during a regular term or between regular terms, for known or unknown reasons.

4.4.1 Withdrawal from the institution

ESSENTIAL

4.4.2 Withdrawal from the program

DISCRETIONARY

Essential for the database, discretionary for the transcript.

4.4.3 Withdrawal from the course

DISCRETIONARY

Essential for the database, discretionary for the transcript.

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4.5 Grades and Averages

Information about the performance of a student in a course or in courses during a given grading period (term or duration of program). In all cases of derived values, the transcript key should explain how the calculations are made.

4.5.1 Course Credits and Course Grade

4.5.1.1 Approved Credit Value **ESSENTIAL**

The number of units of value awarded for the completion of a course, as stated in the issuing institution's official curriculum.

4.5.1.2 Course Grade **ESSENTIAL**

Final indicator of a student's performance in a course, as submitted by the instructor.

4.5.1.3 Credit Value Earned **ESSENTIAL**

The number of credits that a student earns by satisfying the course requirements during a given term.

4.5.2 Grade Distribution Information

4.5.2.1 Class size **DISCRETIONARY**

The number of students in the student's class.

4.5.2.2 Class average **DISCRETIONARY**

A measure of average performance of all students in a course taken during a given term. This is obtained by dividing the total grade points received by the number of credits attempted.

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4.5.2.3 Distribution of grades

DISCRETIONARY

A tally of the number of students who received each possible grade in a given class.

4.5.3 Term Credits and Averages

4.5.3.1 Term Credit Value Attempted

RECOMMENDED

The total number of credits that a student attempts to earn by taking courses during a given term.

4.5.3.2 Term Credit Value Earned

RECOMMENDED

The total number of credits that a student earns by satisfying the course requirements during a given term.

4.5.3.3 Term Average or Term Grade Point Average (GPA)

RECOMMENDED

A measure of average performance in all courses taken by a student during a given term. The method for determining the term average should be described in the Transcript Key. Usually this involves dividing the sum of the grades received by the sum of the credits attempted. In the case of the Term Grade Point Average, the result is obtained by dividing the total grade points received by the number of credits attempted in the term.

4.5.4 Cumulative Credits and Averages

4.5.4.1 Cumulative Credit Value Attempted

RECOMMENDED

The cumulative number of credits that a student attempts to earn by taking courses during his or her enrollment in the issuing institution. This may or may not include credits recognized and transferred from schools in which the student had been previously enrolled.

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4.5.4.2 Cumulative Credit Value Earned

RECOMMENDED

The cumulative number of credits that a student earns by successfully completing courses during his or her enrollment in the issuing institution. This may or may not include credits recognized and transferred from schools in which the student had been previously enrolled.

**4.5.4.3 Cumulative Average or
Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)**

RECOMMENDED

The Cumulative Average is the total sum of the grades received during the entire period of the student's enrollment in the issuing institution divided by the number of credits he or she attempted during that period. The Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) is the number of grade points that a student earns by successfully completing courses during his or her enrollment in the issuing institution, divided by the credits attempted. This may or may not include grade points recognized and transferred from schools in which the student had been previously enrolled.

4.6 Narrative Evaluation

ESSENTIAL...

...when no other type of grading is used.

Narrative evaluation is sometimes used in lieu of other types of grading systems.

See 4.5.1 Course Credits and Course Grade

4.7 Additional Information for Graduate and Professional Studies

**4.7.1 Satisfactory Completion of
Institutional Qualifying Examinations**

ESSENTIAL...

...if it is a program requirement.

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**4.7.2 Advancement and /or
Admission to PhD Candidacy** **ESSENTIAL...**

...if it is a program requirement.

4.7.3 Title of Thesis / Dissertation **ESSENTIAL**

III.5 Student Academic Status and Other Statuses

5.1 Academic Status

Academic status notations result from regular assessments or reviews of the student's academic performance. They do not include actions related to academic misconduct. Only academic status that interrupts the continuous enrollment ("May not continue") is essential for the transcript. All other status indications (warning, probation, eligible to enroll, eligible to continue, may continue, may continue with conditions, etc.) are discretionary.

5.1.1 May not continue **ESSENTIAL**

5.1.2. May continue **DISCRETIONARY**

5.1.3 May continue with conditions **DISCRETIONARY**

5.2 Rank in Class **DISCRETIONARY**

This is the student's numerical rank in class where 1 = highest rank. Variations in grading practices, methodology in determining rank, and other variables tend to render such information of little positive value and establish the potential for harm to the student. However, this element is noted as discretionary in order to maintain consistency with the recommendation of the data element 4.5.2.3 Distribution of Grades, which seems an appropriate way of looking at the performance of a class.

5.3 Disciplinary Action Statements

5.3.1 Disciplinary Action for Academic Misconduct RECOMMENDED

Recommended unless the disciplinary action results in interruption of studies (suspension, expulsion) in which case it is essential. The transcript entry reflects the institutional policy regarding the recording and the expunging of the record of suspensions and other penalties. Details of the offense should not be shown.

5.3.2 Disciplinary Action for Non Academic Misconduct NOT RECOMMENDED

Not recommended unless the disciplinary action results in the interruption of studies (suspension, expulsion,) in which case it is essential. The period of penalty is at the discretion of the institution. The transcript entry reflects the institutional policy regarding the recording and the expunging of the record of suspensions and other penalties. Details of the offense should not be shown.

5.4 Sanctions for Indebtedness NOT RECOMMENDED

5.5 Scholarships (Awards on the basis of academic merit)

5.5.1 Internally adjudicated awards RECOMMENDED

5.5.2 Externally adjudicated awards NOT RECOMMENDED

5.6 Membership in Institutional Committees NOT RECOMMENDED

III. 6 External Learning Recognized by the Issuing Institution

6.1 Transfer Credits RECOMMENDED

Credits awarded for courses completed at another institution. If the details are not listed, a summary of the credits transferred should be provided.

6.1.1 Courses Accepted RECOMMENDED

6.1.2 Credits Accepted RECOMMENDED

6.1.3 Grades Accepted DISCRETIONARY

If institutions accept grades and if they include them in the GPA, then the grades should be displayed and the key should clearly explain the method of calculus.

6.1.4 Cumulative transfer of credits DISCRETIONARY

Summary of transfer credit awarded for courses completed at another institution. While essential for the database, this element is discretionary for the transcript, unless no details of transfer credit are provided, in which case the cumulative transfer of credit should be shown on transcript.

See section III. Basis of Admission

6.1.5 Block transfer of credits RECOMMENDED

6.2 Letters of Permission RECOMMENDED

It is recommended that these be reported in the term in which they were taken.

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6.3 Student Exchange

RECOMMENDED

It is recommended that these be reported in the term in which they were taken.

**6.4 Demonstrated Competencies / Prior Learning /
Experiential Learning / Other Educational Experiences**

RECOMMENDED

If credit, which is not transfer credit, is awarded for learning in another environment, it should be identified as such on the transcript.

If recognized, demonstrated knowledge and skills for which the issuing institution awards credit should appear on the transcript. As well, a body of external work, achieved in artistic, military, corporate, private institutions, continuing education units or courses, which is assessed and recognized, should appear on the transcript. Increasingly postsecondary institutions in Canada are moving in this direction.

Methods of assessment of external learning include challenges for credit and portfolio assessment. Methods of assessment notations are at the institution's discretion.

See 6.1 Transfer Credits

III.7 Statement of Graduation

7.1 Credential Awarded

ESSENTIAL

This is the name of the credential awarded.

7.2 Date Credential Conferred / Date Program Completed

7.2.1 Date Credential Conferred

ESSENTIAL

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7.2.2 Date Program Completed

RECOMMENDED

The request for this information can be met through an official letter specifying that the requirements have been met and that the credential will be conferred on a given date.

7.3 Program of Study at Graduation

ESSENTIAL

Program of study for which the credential is awarded. The institutionally approved curriculum defines the program of study. This data element's name (program, field of study, honours, major, minor, specialization, concentration, co-operative education, etc.) varies with institutional rules and practice.

See 4.1 Program of Study Identification

7.4 Distinctions (Honours) at Graduation

RECOMMENDED

Institutions may award distinctions (honours) such as Dean's List, Distinction, etc., at the time of graduation.

7.5 Professional Certification Requirements

DISCRETIONARY

Professional or other certification requirements should be included only if they are part of the program's requirements. Specific tests scores should not be shown. It should be noted that the institution at the time of graduation validates such requirements.

7.6 Rank in Class at Graduation

DISCRETIONARY

See 5.2 Rank in Class

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III.8 Transcript Issuance Information

8.1 Date of Issue **ESSENTIAL**

8.2 Courses in Progress **RECOMMENDED**

List of courses in which the student is registered at the time of issuance of transcript, either for the current or future terms.

8.3 Transcript Issuance Status **ESSENTIAL**

If the transcript is issued to the student, this fact should be mentioned on the transcript.

8.4 Last Entry Notation **ESSENTIAL**

8.5 Pagination Status Indicator **ESSENTIAL**

For example, *Page 1 of...*

CHAPTER IV
CURRENT TRANSCRIPT ISSUES AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER STUDY

As indicated in Chapter II.3 *Scope and Methodology*, this *Guide* deals only with issues directly related to the transcript. Issues concerning the student record as a whole and its underlying information system or database were deemed to be outside the scope of the present study: the content of the student record and its database, the preservation of the student record (issues of document support, document storage and document disposal), the confidentiality of the student record (issues of policies, of access and of access control), the secure exchange of documents electronically, are all important and quite complex aspects of the work performed by offices of registrars in postsecondary institutions.

For instance, it would be useful to have access to an up to date comparative study of existing legislation regarding the privacy of records and the current state of the institutional policies necessitated by the current legislation in various jurisdictions across the country. Likewise, there are many yet unanswered questions concerning the practices which surround the so-called developmental transcript (or the co-curricular transcript), which attests to activities that have educational value but which take place outside the class. There is a need to explore these issues thoroughly and individually, in order to update other aspects of ARUCC's 1986 *Report on Student Records*.

Emerging issues in transcript policies and management, which also should be explored in the coming years, are the application of the 1999 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications related to Higher Education in the European Region¹⁰, known as the Lisbon Convention, which promotes a transcript-like *Diploma Supplement*, as well as the impact of the European Credit Transfer System¹¹ and of the Asian University Credit Transfer System¹².

¹⁰ <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/recognition/diploma.html>

¹¹ <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/ects.html>

¹² <http://www.umap.org/Main/UCTS.htm>

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Among the currently debated transcript issues in Canada, the National Committee identified four recurring themes which are discussed below: official transcripts, security of transcripts, external learning, and the national student identifier.

IV.1 Official Transcripts

The debate over what constitutes an official transcript is as old as the transcript itself and seems to become more intense with time. The reasons for this seem obvious.

The transcript is intended to be a trusted document. Trusted documents are those which have been issued by a competent designated authority, have not been altered and have been transmitted securely to their intended recipients. If these conditions are met and can be verified, the recipient can trust the accuracy of their content. The extraordinary developments of computing, of print and communications technologies in the last two decades have made trust a central issue in communications in the age of the Internet. How does one ascertain that the received document is trustworthy? The answer lies not in any single feature, technique or procedure, but rather in the process by which a receiving institution verifies the authenticity of the document.

In its 1996 *Academic Record and Transcript Guide*, AACRAO noted that

«...it is now generally the practice for the receiving institution to determine whether or not a transcript is official. One of the key items in such a determination is the delivery method of the transcript, that is, whether it was sent directly from institution to institution, or is forwarded through an intermediary (such as the student whose record is in question).»¹²

This does not mean that the receiving institution has the power or the authority to determine by itself that a transcript issued by another institution is or is not official, by applying its own criteria. After all, each sending and receiving institution has their own, often different, criteria for defining an official transcript. It merely means that the receiving institution has the opportunity to authenticate the document by verifying its identity and authenticity with the sending institution.

In our view, the official character of the transcript is determined by the criteria of each sending and receiving institution. Every issuing institution should determine and make

¹² p. 11

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known, notably through the transcript key, the criteria by which its transcript is deemed official. Among the most important criteria that we recommend are the following:

- The transcript is issued by the designated authority of the issuing institution;
- The transcript is transmitted by secure means such Electronic Data Interchange or in sealed envelopes;
- The transcript indicates if it was issued to students.

By contrast, unofficial transcripts or transcript-like documents include photocopies of transcripts, e-mails or faxes of transcripts (at least until their authenticity has been verified with the sending institution), grade reports, degree audit documents, transcripts posted on unsecured web sites which offer transcript information web services to students and staff.

IV.2 The Security of Transcripts

Concerns regarding the security of the transcript, particularly the paper based transcript, are on the rise. This is understandable in an age when degree and transcript mills sell their products openly on the Internet. Below is just one example, to illustrate the seriousness with which one has to take issues of transcript security and the necessity to insure systematic measures to prevent fraud. Here is how one degree and transcript factory promotes its products for sale:

*«The INTERNET'S #1 Source for Quality Replacement
Novelty & Fake Diplomas and Transcripts www.FantasyDiplomas.com*

*Fake, diplomas, fake diplomas, fake college diplomas, fake high school
diplomas, buy fake diplomas, cheap fake diplomas, best fake diplomas*

*We offer diplomas and transcripts from most US high schools as well as the
colleges and universities on our list. We offer replacement diplomas and
transcripts. While we don't require proof that you actually graduated, we
will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that we abide by all applicable
state and federal laws. If you obtain a diploma from us and didn't actually
graduate, then the document will obviously be a "fake diploma."*

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Our Diplomas are printed on the highest quality parchment paper available. The 72-lb parchment paper is the same thickness as real university diplomas. If you're considering purchasing a document from another diploma service, first ask what type and weight paper they use. We are the only printing service that exclusively uses 72-lb parchment paper for diplomas and genuine (sic) university security paper for high school and college transcripts. Our college transcripts are printed on genuine university security paper. We use the same security paper and even buy it from the same supplier as most US colleges and universities. Visit our transcripts page for more information.»¹⁴

Many similar enterprises advertise their capacity to counter transcript and diploma security measures and “to beat” the security systems with their own tools.

Fraudulent and forged transcripts have reached unprecedented levels, and the very technologies designed to prevent fraud are available to those intent on providing forged documents. Nevertheless, those issuing and receiving legitimate transcripts have at their disposal the means to combat this trend.

Paper Transcripts

Although there are no hard data on the number of paper based transcripts processed by the postsecondary institutions in Canada, compared to those processed electronically, there are reasons to believe that the paper based transcripts form the vast majority.

The support of these trusted documents is both their most vulnerable feature and their most important potential asset to secure their authenticity and integrity. Because of the enormous loss to the economy and the risks to institutional and personal credibility provoked by fraudulent operations, the paper industry has gone to great lengths to provide ever more sophisticated means to insure paper safety. Together with verification processes of the authenticity of the documents that they receive from other institutions which are sending them transcripts, postsecondary institutions issuing transcripts can take advantage of advances in the paper manufacturing technologies to counter the forgeries.

A paper industry document defines security paper or safety paper as paper that has been engineered and manufactured in such a way that it embeds physical features making it

¹⁴ <http://www.diplomasforless.com/>

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able to resist document forgery and copying when it is printed on laser printers. This type of paper

« is fully compliant with the physical paper standards of weight, grain direction, moisture content etc. for laser printers but has additional chemical manufacturing process. Plain laser printer paper meets the physical standards of the laser printer but does not possess any of the capabilities of fiber, chemical, or external processes that make "security paper" fraud resistant and tamper proof. Security paper provides assistance to an institution's "back office processing" of documents by making document fraud tampering attempts physically obvious to the institution's review personnel and prompts the reviewer to look at the document more closely for any form of tampering. The features themselves cannot be readily copied or reproduced via conventional reproduction processes. Security paper is a major preventive mean in stopping forged documents from being validated...Document fraud costs...millions of dollars, every day...Security papers have "engineered features," embedded in the paper itself, of both a fiber and chemical reactive substance to thwart and inhibit ...fraud attempts on these document forms.»¹⁴

However, advances in high resolution color printing, copying and scanning have created easily accessible methods for counterfeiting trusted documents, even when they are printed on safety paper. Accurate color reproduction and detailed resolution now allow the duplication of even high quality offset lithography. As a result, trusted documents such as the transcript should not be printed on commonly available bond paper, used by today's copiers. High resolution copies of such transcripts are often indistinguishable from the original. In light of these issues, safety paper should be chosen with great care to insure that it incorporates not just one but multiple protective features. These security features include:

- the paper meets the major printer manufacturers technical requirements to ensure optimum printing on high resolution laser printers*
- the safety paper check contains an intricate design feature that produces a series of VOIDS if the checks are processed through a single or full color copier.*

¹⁴ *White Paper on Safety Paper* (http://www.acom.com/micr_lib/news005.htm)

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- *the signature area is printed in a different pantograph background than is the document. A warning clause is also printed stating that the signature has a colored background.*
- *the pantographic design is printed with gradient colors. These versions are the most difficult to photocopy and include copier/VOID security feature.*
- *a watermark which is in the paper itself and can be seen when held up to the light.*
- *inclusion of chemical stain that makes it difficult to remove toner from laser printed documents.*
- *inclusion of fluorescent fibers which make printing appear only under ultraviolet light.»¹⁶*

By using safety paper which contains several of these features, issuing institutions can prevent or make more difficult the unauthorized duplication of their transcripts.

Electronic Transcripts

The trustworthiness of transcripts exchanged electronically, from one institution's computer to another institution's computer, is insured by software authentication methods. Such exchanges are the most secure methods of communication of the transcripts. In Canada, the degree of standards based Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) implementation among postsecondary institutions varies greatly. Where it is implemented, EDI's use is greater among universities than among colleges or between universities and colleges. The degree of implementation across the country runs the gamut from full implementation among Ontario universities (but not among Ontario colleges or between Ontario universities and Ontario colleges) to implementation of proprietary EDI in Quebec between the Ministry of Education and the postsecondary institutions (but not standard based EDI implementation among institutions), and everything else in between in the West and in the Atlantic areas. After a burst of activity in the mid 1990s, EDI implementations in postsecondary institutions in Canada have reached a plateau. It is doubtful that EDI will regain momentum in Canada in the near future, given the current state of university funding and extensive coordination required by the EDI technology.

¹⁶ Idem.

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A new, emerging, technology, the Extensible Markup Language (XML), which like the ubiquitous Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) is a subset of the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML), holds great promise as the foundation of simplified and less costly methods of encapsulating and transmitting secure documents and transactions electronically through the Internet. There are many initiatives under way to develop technical and business standards for using XML for electronic transmissions. Of particular interest for postsecondary institutions is the work being done by the Postsecondary Electronics Standards Council (PESC)¹⁷ in the USA.

Among other publications, PESC has issued a white paper on XML for electronic exchanges¹⁸, a technical report on the XML specifications as they apply to higher education¹⁹ and a white paper on the student identifiers²⁰. Even more remarkable, PESC has submitted recently a proposal for a standard for the postsecondary transcript:

«At the February 2003 American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) X12 meeting, representatives of PESC, the XML Forum for Education, and the higher education community submitted the XML Postsecondary Transcript for review and approval. This means that once reviewed and approved, a process which normally takes several months, the XML Postsecondary Transcript will become an X12 standard.

The XML Postsecondary Transcript is the result of collaborative efforts between PESC's XML Forum and AACRAO's SPEEDE Committee, the original pioneers in higher education standardization.»²¹

¹⁷ <http://www.standardscouncil.org/index.asp>

¹⁸ *Extensible Markup Language for Electronic Transactions in Higher Education*, A Publication of the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council, XML Work Group, Washington, DC May, 2000, 27 pp.

¹⁹ *XML Technical Specification for Higher Education*, A Publication of the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council, Washington, DC September 2001, 28 pp.

²⁰ *Report of the Student Identifier Work Group*, A Publication of the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council, XML Work Group, Washington, DC May, 2000, 19 pp.

²¹ *The Standard, News and Commentary on Standards and Technology in Postsecondary Education*, Volume 2, Issues 1, February 2003. p. 8

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This holds great promise for the future of secure exchange of documents and transactions among postsecondary institutions.

IV.3 External Learning

One of the most important challenges encountered by professionals in the field is how to measure and record learning achieved outside the issuing institution. In our global society, mobility of learners requires recognition and portability of the learning achieved elsewhere. The variety of situations, from simple credit transfers, through exchange programs, to challenge for credit, to demonstration and assessment of competencies, commands a re-conceptualization of what in past publications was labeled as “non-traditional transcript entries”²².

In this *Guide* external learning is understood to mean learning which is occurring or has occurred outside the issuing institution, from either a time or space perspective, or both. Indeed, there is no valid reason to separate “traditional” and “non-traditional” learning. The distinction has been associated with the environment in which the learning to be evaluated, validated and recognized, has occurred, the period in which it does occur or has occurred. Therefore, a value neutral concept such as external learning seems more apt to express the ever more present realities of life-long learning.

Increasingly, postsecondary institutions in Canada are moving in the direction of evaluating and, when deemed valid, recognizing learning that occurs or has occurred outside their boundaries. This may include longstanding recognition of transfer credits from other institutions, recognition of learning achieved while on leave to study in other institutions, at home or abroad and, increasingly, learning achieved through other educational, work, or life experiences, known as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). Prior Learning Assessment is defined as

«the process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of learning acquired through formal and informal study. This may include work and life experience, training, independent study, volunteering, travel, hobbies, and family experiences. The recognition of prior learning can be used toward the requirements of an academic or

²² The 1996 AACRAO *Academic Record and Transcript Guide* mentions Experiential Learning, Credit by Examination, Correspondence Study and Continuing Education Units

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training program, occupational/professional certification or for employment/labor market entry purposes.»²³

The Ontario Institute for the Study of Education²⁴ has developed one of the most comprehensive sources of information on prior learning²⁵, in the framework of the national research network for New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL)²⁶, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to study informal learning and its relation to formal and continuing education throughout the life course.

IV.4 The National Student Number (ESIS-NSN)

Unique keys or universal identifiers are important data elements for student information systems which are the foundation of all transcripts. Unique keys can achieve reliable identifications and accurate matching between persons' identities and their data and documents. In the context of emerging technologies like XML, and of real time transactions in the provision of web services to students, a unique student key across systems and institutions is especially worth considering. A universal student identifier across systems and institutions has potential not only as a research tool but also as an administrative and service tool²⁷. Nevertheless, the highly sensitive character of such powerful tools makes their acceptance problematic and their implementation difficult.

The National Student Number is a unique student identifier prescribed by Statistics Canada for reporting and for analytical purposes. The National Student Number is part of the Enhanced Student Information System (ESIS), developed by Statistics Canada for its data collection survey and designed to obtain and to publish information on student and graduates numbers of postsecondary institutions in Canada. Statistics Canada describes its Enhanced Student Information System (ESIS) as follows:

²³ The Canadian Association for Prior Learning (CAPLA)
(<http://www.tyendinaga.net/fnti/prior/capla.htm>)

²⁴ <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/>

²⁵ OISE, Prior Learning and Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)
(<http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~plar/>)

²⁶ <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/sese/csew/nall/>

²⁷ This seems to be the trend in the USA. PESC's *Report of the Student Identifier Group* analyzed several specific student unique identifiers, among them the Canadian ESIS-NSN. Its conclusion is that «*an authenticable ID, SSN or not, makes sense for controlling access and authorization of actions by the student. It may not be useful for matching, and might not be unique unless the SSN is stored behind it* » (p.13)

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«ESIS is the acronym for the Enhanced Student Information System. ESIS is the national survey that enables Statistics Canada to publish information on enrolments and graduates of Canadian postsecondary education institutions.

Implemented in the year 2000, ESIS has begun to replace current postsecondary enrolment and graduate surveys with a single survey. Upon full implementation, ESIS will capture annually, the total enrolment and graduate information for all Canadian postsecondary institutions. To achieve this, Statistics Canada must request detailed information from postsecondary education institutions about the programs and courses offered, as well as about the students themselves and the program(s) and courses in which they were registered or from which they have graduated.

Upon commitment from all postsecondary education institutions, ESIS will become a means of following students throughout their academic careers in order to build a comprehensive picture of student flows - that is, their mobility and pathways within Canadian postsecondary education institutions. Mobility refers to geographic movement. Pathways refer to movement among fields of study, levels of education, and registration status (full-time and part-time). To achieve this, the ESIS database will carry a unique longitudinal record for each postsecondary student in Canada that will provide a history of flows he/she has taken as the student progresses through the education system».²⁸

Without going into the technical specification of the ESIS National Student Number, Statistics Canada describes its identifier as a unique tracking device which will be used only for research purposes:

«The ESIS database will contain a single longitudinal record for each postsecondary student in Canada. Maintaining a unique record for each student requires a reliable identification system...Institutions are encouraged to include a field for the NSN in their administrative systems, as it is to be permanently linked to the student record and attached to the student transcript.

²⁸ <http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/ESIS/what.htm>. (Statistics Canada - ESIS). The technical specification for the ESIS – NSN can be found at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/ESIS/nsn.htm>

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The 30-character identifier is comprised of an institution code, a Statistics Canada institution code, and an institution-assigned student number. Initially, this number will be assigned to all postsecondary students at the time of ESIS implementation by each institution . New students to an institution will carry their NSN on their transcript from another institution, or, if they have not yet had one assigned, the institution will assign one.»²⁹

Presently only postsecondary institutions from the Atlantic region are using the ESIS-NSN. In their experience, maintenance is a serious issue.

There are particular issues associated with the implementation of the ESIS-NSN in various provinces, depending on local circumstances. For instance in Québec, the Ministry of Education has assumed responsibility for reporting student numbers to Statistics Canada (SISCU). Therefore, Québec universities and colleges do not have to report directly to Statistics Canada.

Even institutions that do report student data directly to Statistics Canada only need the ESIS-NSN in their Student Information Systems databases. This data element is of no consequence for the transcript.

²⁹ *Report of the Student Identifier Work Group*, A Publication of the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council, XML Work Group, Washington, DC May, 2000, pp.10-11

**NATIONAL TRANSCRIPT GUIDE FOR USE IN CANADIAN
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Conclusion**

CONCLUSION

The work on this *Guide* began as a simple attempt to update the 1986 ARUCC *Report on Student Records*. The result has exceeded the bounds of an update and has produced an innovative publication.

While focusing on the area of transcript data elements, its recommendations are the result of a thorough investigation of the practices regarding transcripts and their components and of a careful analysis of their specificities in the Canadian context. Clear definitions and an unambiguous classification of transcript-related concepts and data elements are its hallmarks.

The *Guide* is equally the result of a vast consultative process in which representatives of postsecondary institutions from all parts of the county have crafted recommendations on the treatment of transcript data elements and in which professionals in the field have been given every opportunity to express their points of view.

To this end, these guidelines are recommendations and postsecondary institutions are free to set policies and to implement practices which differ from the points of view expressed herein. It is hoped nevertheless that this *Guide* will be of assistance to Canadian postsecondary institutions and their communities in their transcript related activities.

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Appendices**

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Reference Documents

Appendix B – Canadian Postsecondary Terminology

Appendix C – Transcript Key Data Elements

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Appendix A - Reference Documents**

***APPENDIX A
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS***

Academic Transcript and Records: Survey of Current Practices, AACRAO, Special Report, April 2002, 9 pp.

British Columbia Record and Transcript Guide for Use in Postsecondary Institutions in BC, Last Revised March 25, 1998, 12 pp.

Academic Record and Transcript Guide, AACRAO, 1996, 37 pp.

EDI Standards and & Implementation Workbook, The definitive guide for adopting electronic data interchange as a business practice by Canadian educational institutions, EDI Task Force, (1996, 62 pp.)

Report of the Task Force on Student Records, A Publication Sponsored by the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada, April 1986, 24 pp.

Rapport du groupe de travail sur les dossiers d'étudiants, Publication parrainée par l'Association des Registraires des Universités et des Collèges du Canada, avril 1986, 24 pp.

Academic Record and Transcript Guide, AACRAO, Revised 1984, 29 pp.

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Appendix B – Canadian Postsecondary Transcript Terminology**

***APPENDIX B
CANADIAN POSTSECONDARY TRANSCRIPT TERMINOLOGY***

AACRAO

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers

Academic

A qualifier indicating that which pertains to higher education. When used to describe programs or courses in higher education, it generally refers to the classical, liberal education rather than to the technical or professional education. Contemporary usage tends to reserve this term for that which pertains to university and use instead the qualifier “postsecondary” for other uses.

Admission, Basis of

The previous educational achievement (title, degree, educational record) or other criteria used to grant permission to enroll in a postsecondary program.

ARUCC

The Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada

Attendance, Dates of

The period covered by each term or session of an academic year. The beginning and the ending date of a term or session are generally the first day of classes and the last day of the final examination period. See Calendar.

Average, Grade Point see Grade Point Average.

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Award, Academic

Recognition obtained for educational achievements.

Bachelor's Degree see Degree, Undergraduate.

Block Credits

A form of transfer credit which consists of granting credits amounting to the value of credits attached to a group of courses. See Transfer Credits.

Calendar

1. The method by which the institution structures its teaching and learning periods. The most common type of Canadian postsecondary calendar is the term or session, comprising between 12 and 15 weeks of classes, inclusive of the final examination period.
2. The printed or the online publication, which presents information about the institution, the credentials, the programs and the courses that it offers. The printed calendar is usually published annually or biennially. The equivalent American term is "Catalog".

Candidacy, Admission to

The act of being accepted as a candidate for a graduate degree.

Challenge for Credit

An examination taken in lieu of enrolling in a course, in order to obtain the credits attached to the subject matter covered in the course. See Examination.

Class

1. A group of students receiving instruction at the same time.
2. A group of students whose admission date, or graduating date, is the same.
3. The regularly scheduled meetings of the students enrolled in a course or in a section of a course.

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Class Rank see Rank in Class.

Class Size

The number of students enrolled in a course or in a section of a course at a given point in time.

Co-operative Education

A method of course delivery, which combines and alternates periods of full-time study with periods of full-time supervised remunerated employment, in the area of the professional activity of the future graduate.

Correspondence Education

A method of course delivery conducted by mail. It may or may not involve face-to-face meetings with instructors.

Course

A discrete unit of instruction which is part of a program leading to a credential.

Course Description

The brief description of the content of a course as presented in the institution's official publications (calendar, etc.).

Course Identifier

An acronym composed of various elements such as the offering faculty and department, the subject field, the course number, the section number, which serves to identify the courses offered, meeting time and places, instructor, etc.

Course of Study see Program of Study.

Course Section

A division of a course, taught at a specific time and place by a specific instructor. A course may consist of one or several sections.

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Credential

The official title bestowed as recognition for having completed and satisfied the requirements of an academic program.

Credit

1. The unit of value attached to a given course.
2. The recognition awarded to a student for successfully completing the course's requirements.

See Block Credits, see Transfer Credits, see Challenge for Credit.

Credit, Advanced Standing

Credit awarded, usually at the time of admission, for learning achieved externally to the awarding institution. Such credit may be given for work done in another institution, or as a result of examination, or of portfolio evaluation.

Credit Course

A course carrying a unit value which can be applied against a program of study's requirements, if the course is completed successfully.

Credit for Experience

The credit awarded for one's work or life experience.

Credit Hour

The unit of value that expresses the quantity of course work required. The number of credit hours of a course is usually determined by the number of hours of class per week multiplied by the number of weeks in the term or session. One credit hour is usually assigned for each hour which meets per week over a term or session.

Credit Transfer see Transfer Credit

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Appendix B – Canadian Postsecondary Transcript Terminology

Credits Attempted

The courses, and their corresponding credit value, in which the student has been enrolled and for which the student has received a grade. This does not include courses from which the student was authorized to withdraw prior to grade notation deadlines or without academic penalty.

Credits, Cumulative

The sum of all credits earned towards a credential, including credits achieved and recognized from other institutions.

Data Element

A discrete unit of information that can be machine processed and computed.

Degree see Credential.

Degree, Associate

An American term, designating a title granted upon completion of an educational program of at least two years but less than four years of college studies.

Degree Audit

The process of analyzing and summarizing the courses and credits earned, compared to the degree requirements.

Degree, Graduate

A degree beyond the baccalaureate level.

Degree Mill

A commercial enterprise, which sells fraudulent degrees, diplomas and transcripts.

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Appendix B – Canadian Postsecondary Transcript Terminology

Degree Requirements

The criteria to be met, prescribed by a postsecondary institution, as conditions for granting a degree. The degree requirements are stated in official publications, notably the calendar.

Degree, Undergraduate

Degree at the baccalaureate level, normally requiring three or four years of full-time academic work beyond the secondary level, and leading to the title Bachelor of...

Degree with Distinction (or with Honours)

The recognition of educational achievement (*cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude*) in the awarding of a degree.

Department, Academic

An organizational unit in postsecondary institutions, responsible for teaching and research in a discipline or in a field of study.

Diploma

The document, also called parchment, attesting to the awarding of a credential upon successful completion of a program of study requirements.

Distance Education

A method of course delivery in which students are not required to take up residence in the institution for regular class meetings and receipt of course materials. It may or may not involve correspondence or multimedia delivery.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)

The exchange of routine business transactions and information from computer to computer, based on official standard protocols called transactions sets. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has approved a number of computer-processable standard transaction sets, including a transaction set for the exchange of transcripts, for use by North-American postsecondary institutions.

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Appendix B – Canadian Postsecondary Transcript Terminology

Electronic Classroom see Online Education.

Enrollment

1. The act of registering in a course.
2. The number of students enrolled in a course.

Examination

1. The evaluation of achievement or ability.
2. The tools used to make such an evaluation.

Examination, Credit by See Challenge for Credit.

Examination, Qualifying

The examination taken to determine the student's qualifications for candidacy to a graduate degree. Also called comprehensive examination.

Extensible Markup Language (XML)

A subset of the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML), which holds great promise to be the foundation of simplified and less costly methods of encapsulating and of transmitting secure documents and transactions electronically through the Internet. In the spring of 2003, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is considering a proposal for a standard for the postsecondary transcript, the XML Postsecondary Transcript.

Good Standing

An academic status noting that a student's academic record is such that he or she may continue in his or her studies.

Grade

A representation of a student's achievement in a course, expressed on a letter scale or a numeric scale, or in percentages. See Transcript Key.

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Appendix B – Canadian Postsecondary Transcript Terminology

Grade Point

The numerical value assigned to a grade, expressed on a letter scale, in order to be able to convert the letter grades to numerical values. Sometimes called “quality points”.

Grade Point Average

A measure of a student’s academic performance over a group of courses, obtained by dividing the sum of grade points earned by the student, by the total number of attempted credits in the same group of courses.

Graduation

The formal recognition by a postsecondary institution, through a credential conferral, of the successful completion of a program of study. See Degree.

Graduation Requirements see Degree Requirements

Honours Program see Program of Study.

Independent Study

An individual program of study with subjects and topics chosen by the student with the department’s approval.

Major see Program of Study.

Master’s Degree see Degree, Graduate.

Minor see Program of Study.

Misconduct, Academic

Behavior that is at variance with accepted institutional standards regarding academic and intellectual work.

Misconduct, Nonacademic

Behavior that is at variance with accepted institutional standards regarding matters other than academic work.

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Appendix B – Canadian Postsecondary Transcript Terminology

Narrative Evaluation

A written assessment describing a student's performance and achievement which substitutes for or complements the grade. See Grade.

Online Education

A method of course delivery that utilizes, in various combinations, a wide array of technology platforms, including satellite communications, interactive television, the Internet and its technologies, CD-ROMs, videotapes. It may or may not involve face-to-face instruction in a physical class. See Distance Education.

Paper, Safety see Security Paper.

Privacy Legislation

Laws enacted by various provincial legislatures in order to protect the privacy of personal records and to insure, under certain conditions, legitimate access to an individual's personal information.

Probation, Academic

An academic status resulting from unsatisfactory performance. Usually accompanied by specific requirements and conditions to improve performance. See Standing, Academic

Program of Study

An institutionally defined curriculum, which leads to a credential. The name of the program (field of study, honours, major, minor, specialization, concentration, etc.) varies with institutional rules and practice.

Rank in Class

The relative position of a student in a defined student population based upon his or her academic performance as measured by various methods (Grade Average, Grade Point Average). Sometimes called Class Standing.

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Seal, Institutional

A stamp or an equivalent device used to authenticate transcripts, diplomas and other official documents issued by a postsecondary institution. It may or may not be raised or embossed.

Section see Course Section.

Security Paper

Paper engineered and manufactured by using chemical methods and techniques to endow it with special properties such as revealing hidden words when photocopied.

Semester

The designation of a term in the semester system calendar. See Calendar.

Session see Calendar.

Standing, Academic

The status of a student at a postsecondary institution based on academic performance. Examples of academic statuses include: Good Standing, Probation, Warning, Dismissal.

Status, Academic, see Standing, Academic.

Student Record

A file containing documents and data, regardless of their physical medium (paper, electronic), their format, type or characteristics, created to gather, to store and to preserve information regarding a student's entire history of learning at a postsecondary institution. The file includes courses, grades, credits and degrees pertaining to the file's subject.

Term see Calendar.

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Transcript

A subset of a student's educational record at a given point in time, issued by a postsecondary institution, which reflects the student's complete and accurate educational history at the issuing institution. The transcript is considered official when it has been verified as issued by a competent issuing authority. Authentication criteria may or may not include direct transmission from institution to institution and presence of an institutional seal. See Seal, Institutional.

Transcript Key

A document describing in detail the meaning of the symbols and abbreviations, as well as the methods of calculation used in the transcript. The Key usually appears on the transcript's back page.

Transcript Legend see Transcript Key.

Transcript Mill see Degree Mill.

Transfer Credits

The credits recognized for learning achieved externally to the transcript issuing institution, usually at the time of admission.

Trimester

The designation of a term in the trimester system calendar. See Calendar.

Virtual Classroom see Online Education.

Warning, Academic

A caution issued to a student whose academic performance is unsatisfactory.

Withdrawal

The act of leaving a course, a program of study or a postsecondary institution before the term's end. May or may not carry prior approval.

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Appendix C – Transcript Key Data Elements**

***APPENDIX C
TRANSCRIPT KEY DATA ELEMENTS***

Institution's Name
Affiliated Campuses / Institutions
Statement of Accreditation / Establishment / Mission Statements
Contact Information: Address / Phone / Fax /Email / Web sites
Undergraduate and Graduate Grading Systems: Versions and Dates
Grade Equivalencies
GPA Calculation
Academic Status Decisions Information
Non-Grade Designations / Symbols
Academic Terms Description: Names and Dates / Units of Instruction / Credit Hour Definition
Course Numbering Schema Information / Non Credit Courses Information
Program Requirements Information
Standing at Graduation Information
Awards Information
Security Information: Official and Unofficial Transcript / Paper / Seal
Policies and Systems Changes Information
Date of the Key's Last Revision

ARUCC



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